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THE MOSQUE OF SANTA SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE
(See "The Mosque as a Place of Worship")

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The Arabian Mission

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The Mosque as a Place of Worship

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER, D.D., F.R.G.S.

(Reprinted by courtesy of the World Call.—*Ed.*)

EVEN as the religious architecture in India is based on the beliefs of the people and their spiritual ideals, and as in Christian architecture the church, or gathering place of believers, has been the determining factor, so the story of Islam from its very origin can be read in the arches and colonnades, the minarets and saints' tombs of the Moslem world. The early basilica was modeled after the Greek temple; later the Gothic arch determined the great cathedrals of Europe for altar-worship, while the modern church has adapted its architecture more to social service and the idea of a comfortable auditorium. Even so we can read something of the development of Islam in its mosque architecture. Large or small, the mosque is the place of prayer for two hundred million believers in Mohammed's mission.

The old, almost unknown, pagan pantheon at Mecca has become the religious shrine and the center of universal pilgrimage for one-seventh of the human race. Islam in its present extent embraces three continents and counts its believers from Sierra Leone in Africa to Canton in China, and from Tobolsk, Siberia, to Singapore and Java. In Russia, Moslems spread their prayer-carpets southward toward Mecca; at Zanzibar they look northward to the Holy City; in Kansu and Shensi millions of Chinese Moslems pray toward the west, and in the



THE MIRHAB

This niche is found in the center of the wall in every mosque and always points in the direction of the sacred city of Mecca.

wide Sudan they look eastward toward the Beit Allah and the Black Stone, a vast Moslem brotherhood. If we regard numbers, Islam is perhaps the mightiest of all the non-Christian religions; as regards its geographical distribution, it is the only religion beside Christianity which holds a world-empire of hearts in its grasp; and its wonderful and rapid spread proves beyond a doubt that it is a great missionary religion and aims at world-conquest. Mohammed's word has been fulfilled: "So we have made you the center of the nations that you should bear witness to men."

The English word "mosque" is derived from the Arabic root *Sajada Masjid*, signifying "place of prostration" or "worship" and it is found in various forms in all European languages. The observ-



A MORE MODERN MOSQUE FOUND IN SOUTH AFRICA

ance of prayer at stated times during the day, which is so characteristic of Moslem worship, was probably practiced by Mohammed and his few disciples before he left Mecca. It is only after the *Hejira* (migration) to Medina, however, that we read of a special building set apart for worship and adapted to the ritual of Moslem prayer. The story as given in the Traditions is as follows: When the Prophet's camel was only three miles from Medina on his flight from Mecca she kneeled and refused to rise until prayer had been made. The Prophet decided, therefore, that the first mosque of Islam should be erected on this spot and he accordingly marked out

the direction for prayer with an iron javelin. Afterward he used to visit this place once a week on foot, and is reported to have said that a prayer in the mosque of Quba was equal to the pilgrimage to Mecca. Originally a square building of very small size, it was afterward enlarged and in recent days was rebuilt by the Sultan Abdul Hamid.

While the mosque of Quba, also called the Mosque of Piety, is the earliest religious building of Islam, there are three larger and more important mosques which are considered especially sacred. First in order is the one at Mecca which contains the Kaaba or cubic house with its famous Black Stone. The second in importance is the so-called Prophet's Mosque at Medina, built by Mohammed himself and repeatedly restored and beautified. Five earlier mosques were destroyed by the elements or by fire during the first century of Islam, and the sixth, as it now stands, was built by the nineteenth Sultan of the Mamluk dynasty in Egypt. The



THE MIMBAR

This represents the pulpit and the leader stands upon the middle step as he preaches to the people.

mosque at Jerusalem, built on the Rock of Solomon's temple is, according to Moslem tradition, the third in sanctity. It is called by the Arabs the Dome of the Rock but is more generally known as the Mosque of Omar. The rock on which it rests is said to have come from Paradise; next to Mecca and Medina it is considered the most sacred spot in the universe. The building, as it now stands, is of gradual growth and its history goes back to A. D. 831.

Mosques are found in every place where Islam has its followers. There is not a province of China nor a city of any size in India without its mosques. From Tangier to Teheran these places of worship abound everywhere. Mosques are found in nearly every sea-port of the African continent.

The essentials of a mosque are first of all a place for ablution before the ritual prayer, for the necessary preliminary to every Moslem prayer is legal purification. Books have been written on this subject, describing the occasions, method, variety and effect of ablution by water or, in its absence, by sand. The ritual of purification is one of the chief shibboleths of the many Moslem sects. In Mohammedan works of theology there are chapters on

the proper use of the toothpick, on the different kinds of water allowed for ablution, and on all the varieties of uncleanness. A second essential is an arch or niche which is called *Mirhab*, to indicate the direction of prayer, namely a line straight to Mecca. Then there is always a *Mimbar* or pulpit to the right of the prayer niche. And finally an elevated structure sometimes rising to the proportions of a tower or minaret, at one of the corners of the building to accommodate the crier or *Muezzin* who calls the faithful to prayer. It is necessary that the walls of the mosque shall be built in accordance with the meridian of Mecca so that those who pray may automatically know the right direction. At first Mohammed prayed toward Jerusalem, in this respect following the Jews who turn their faces toward the Temple of Solomon. Sixteen months after he arrived in Medina, the *Kiblah*, or direction of prayer, was changed by divine order as follows:

Verily WE have seen thee turning about thy face toward the Heavens; wherefore WE shall cause thee to turn toward a Kiblah that shall please thee. Turn now thy face toward the Holy Temple of Mecca. Wheresoever ye are, when ye pray, turn toward it.

After the revelation in this verse Jerusalem was abandoned and Mecca became the true center for prayer and worship.

In addition to the essentials above mentioned there is often a great open court-yard where prayer is generally made. In the more pretentious mosques this court-yard is surrounded by a cloister or colonnade which was used from the earliest days for the recital of the Koran or day-schools. At the present day in Cairo, Egypt, these colonnades are used as class-rooms for university students.

When a Moslem enters his place of worship he stops at the barrier of the gateway, which generally has a very high threshold, takes off his shoes or sandals, carries them in his left hand, sole to sole, and puts his right foot first as he passes into the sacred enclosure. All those who refuse to remove their foot-gear (such as infidel visitors), are provided with leather or cloth slippers to cover their shoes. After performing the ablution he commences his prayers individually or in the public services at the stated hours, especially on Friday, by standing in rank with the other worshippers.

The chief officer of every mosque is called the *Imam*, the leader of the prayer. The trustee or superintendent is called *Mutawalli*. Many of the mosques are heavily endowed and are therefore kept in perfect repair. In every case the land on which a mosque has been built is a permanent place of worship and cannot be used for secular purposes. This fact has often brought trouble when ignored by the thoughtless, and only recently the Indian Government had reason to regret an incident at Cawnpore where a mosque was said to be in danger of desecration because a new highway encroached

upon the place used for ablution. Mohammed's injunctions regarding the sacred character of mosques are given as follows:

When you enter a *Masjid*, you must say, "O Creator! open on us the doors of Thy Compassion"; and when you leave the *Masjid*, say, "O Lord! we supplicate thy munificence."

It is a sin to spit in a *Masjid*, and the removal of the sin is to cover it over.

Whoever shall enter a *Masjid*, let him enter it for a good object, namely, to learn something himself or to teach others. For he ranks as an equal with him who fights in the cause of God, who thus enters a *Masjid*; but he who enters a *Masjid* on any other account, is like unto a man who covets the property of another. Verily, a time will come when men will attend to worldly matters in a *Masjid*. But sit ye not with such.

Do not read poetry in a *Masjid*, and do not buy and sell there, nor sit in a circle talking before prayers on a Friday.



A GROUP OF MINARETS

Every mosque has one or more minarets. From these heights the muezzin sounds the call to prayer five times a day.

The prayers of a man in his own house are equal to the reward of one prayer, but prayers in a *Masjid* near his home are equal to twenty-five prayers, and in a *Jami* (or central mosque), they are equal to five hundred prayers, and in Jerusalem to fifty thousand, and in my *Masjid* (at Madinah), fifty thousand, and at the *K'abah*, one hundred thousand.

Although the Prophet did not forbid women to attend public prayer it is considered better for them to pray in private. Only

in China, as far as I know, are there special mosques for women. In India and the Near East one sometimes sees special enclosures shut off by lattice work for their use.

The *Mimbar* or pulpit is characteristic of Islam. Originally it consisted of three wooden steps and its structure was of wood or marble. Tradition tells us that Mohammed stood on the first step, Abu Bakr on the second and Omar on the last. Othman, however, fixed upon the middle step and since then it has been the custom to preach from the middle step of the pulpit even though it may be of considerable height. Among Shiah Mohammedans the pulpits generally have four steps. In Cairo, where Moslem architecture reached its highest point of perfection, the pulpits of many of the mosques are very elaborate. Some of them are beautifully carved in marble; others are of wood and inlaid with precious stones or mother of pearl. In Africa and Central Asia the pulpits are all of a more primitive character.

The origin of the *Mirhab* or niche in the center of the wall of the mosque which marks the direction of Mecca is disputed. Originally a black stone of great size was placed against the north wall of the Prophet's mosque pointing out the direction of Jerusalem. This stone was removed to the south side when the *Kiblah* was changed to Mecca. There is considerable evidence to show that the *Mirhab* was an imitation of the altar alcove in the Oriental churches and to this day it is considered improper for anyone to pray standing immediately within the enclosure of the niche.

In the early days of Islam the call to prayer was made in the open court and there were no minarets. The earliest minaret of which we read was erected by Omar in A.H. 86. Among the Wahhabis of Arabia and the other Puritan sects the minaret is omitted in building the mosques while the roof is used as the place to call the faithful to prayer. This Call to Prayer, heard from minarets five times daily in all Moslem lands, is as follows. The Muezzin cries it in a loud voice, and always in the Arabic language:

God is most great! God is most great! God is most great! God is most great! I testify that there is no god but God! I testify that there is no god but God! I testify that Mohammed is the Apostle of God! Come to prayer! Come to prayer! Come to prosperity! Come to prosperity! God is most great! God is most great! There is no god but God!

In the call to early morning prayer, the words, "Prayer is better than sleep" are added twice, after the call to prosperity.

While the architecture of the mosques in most lands is Saracenic this does not always signify that the building was constructed by the Arabs or by Moslem converts. Throughout the entire Near East many of the ancient churches were converted into mosques after the Arab invasion. This process continued down through the centuries and the most striking illustration of a church now used

as a mosque is that of Santa Sophia at Constantinople, built by a Roman Emperor.

In India as well as in Malaysia there are a number of examples of Hindu temples turned into mosques. In Africa the modern buildings are western in style.

The mosque, as its very name imports, is chiefly a place "where prayer is wont to be made," but the recitation of the Koran is also conducted there during the Friday worship and on special occasions such as feast-days and the Month of Fasting. In order that the sacred volume may be read through rapidly it is divided into thirty parts or portions and bound in as many separate little volumes, one of which is read each night during the month of Ramadhan. On some occasions thirty men read each one portion, complete the task, and so obtain the merit of its perusal in a much shorter period. The caskets in which these books are kept are many of them exceedingly beautiful, covered with mosaic, and encrusted with gold

and silver ornaments. The Cairo museum has some wonderful specimens of these ancient Koran cases. There are no idols in the mosque and with the exception of the words in praise of Mohammed no inscriptions that would offend a Christian. May we not hope that even as the synagogue became the church in the first century so in the twentieth century we may see many mosques used for Christian worship.



AN OLD MOSQUE AND MINARET, ALEPPO, SYRIA

The Arabian Mission Meets in Karachi

REV. G. D. VAN PEURSEM

FOR economic reasons of both money and time, it was decided to hold our annual meeting in India. So work and vacation were combined with profit. Karachi was chosen not because of its attraction for the missionary, but because it is the port the Arabian missionaries have to embark from or pass on their way from the Indian hills to the field. It was much regretted that we could not accept the cordial and pressing invitation of our American friends of the Y. W. C. A., and the missionary rest home in Poona. Their interest in Arabia would have given us a much more suitable atmosphere for the planning and discussing of our work. We do hope that when they read these few lines, they may wish with us that some other year we may meet in Poona.

All arrived in Karachi for the appointed time. Some came from Simla, others from Kashmir and others from Kodaikanal. Those of us who came from Bombay by sea will not forget the trip very soon. Any desirous of being rocked in the cradle of the deep, may try the turbine steamer during the monsoon, facing a contrary wind, the ship's hull empty and the cabins topheavy. The desire for rocking will long have left by the time they arrive at Karachi. It is noteworthy that we had as a fellow traveler Shauket Ali. He was a prisoner of the British Government and was met by the police out at sea before we disembarked in the harbor of Karachi. Both he and his brother have made themselves famous or otherwise by joining Ghandi in the non-co-operation movement in India.

The meeting was called to order Monday, September 17th. According to rules, every morning session opened with a half-hour of devotional service. The leaders gave us helpful suggestions, practical in their application. The first few sessions were taken up by the reading of the reports, then discussion followed. This part of the proceeding is the most interesting to most of us. Each one is anxious to get a glimpse or hopeful sign of encouragement in the report of the other. When Dr. Cantine read his report the attention was keen. The mission had appointed Dr. and Mrs. Cantine to Baghdad not only to continue mission work in that field but also to study conditions bearing on future mission policy. We were anxious to hear what proposals they would make as to the forward movement in Mesopotamia.

The conclusion seemed to be that our mission both in personnel and financially is unable to undertake the whole job and to cope with the tremendous opportunities offered in that region. Although

Baghdad will again be temporarily occupied for at least another year, we are looking forward to the co-operative action of several Boards to come and possess the land for the church of Christ. The unsettled condition in government matters does not necessarily interfere with the movements of His kingdom in Arabia. Other reports showed that in the river country there are hundreds of villages accessible by the missionary of Amara and Basrah. Some means of conveyance must be found so that the missionary can economize his time.

It was encouraging to hear of the progress the boys in Basrah School are making in the study of the Gospel. The work there is



A DESERT CARAVAN

growing by leaps and bounds. The change in government will mean the withdrawal of the grant-in-aid to the school and this will bring added financial responsibility to the home base. But for all that, we feel that we cannot withdraw our extensive plans for the future in school work. The baptism of three converts during the year was hailed with joy by all. It was reported that they are all doing well indeed. Dr. Dame gave us some idea of the fanaticism of the inland Arabs of Nejd. Their intolerant attitude precludes the possibility of women missionaries entering that land as yet. The pirate coast

and all of Oman were shown to be open to the medical missionary. This naturally brought up the discussion as to how we might secure medical men and women in the near future. This need was quite heart-rending in view of the fact that the Lansing Memorial Hospital is still without a doctor, the Kuwait hospital soon to be in charge of native assistants, because the doctor in charge is on furlough, and that the Bahrein and Matrah fields are still crying for both men and women doctors. All the reports suggested a strong appeal for medical missionaries. After the reading of the reports every station was remembered in special prayer.

An annual meeting is much like a family reunion at home. Missionaries of the same station become attached to one another like members of one family. Just as such a reunion at home would be in the home of a relative, so do we enjoy it better and profit more if the meeting is held in one of our stations. We hope that it will therefore not be necessary to have an annual meeting in India or away from the field again. Most of us seem to think that the gains scarcely outweigh the loss.



The Appeal of Oman

DR. P. W. HARRISON

ARABIA has become the land of opportunity. There are open doors in almost every direction. To the North, Mesopotamia could absorb the activities of the whole Arabian Mission. To the West, the citadel of the whole Moslem world seems at last to be opening its doors to the Gospel, but in many ways the most insistent and appealing call comes from the South, where Oman stretches out its hands to welcome the Missionary.

A recent medical trip into that country has brought a vivid realization of the opportunity there. The medical needs surpass description. The whole country is asking for a Doctor, and wherever we went we were besieged by crowds of the sick and afflicted. We did almost a hundred major operations and attended as well as we could to many hundreds of other patients. The waiting list never disappeared; indeed, we left with a longer one than when we started. A hospital in Debai, or indeed at any other point on the Oman coast, could rival any hospital in Basrah or Baghdad, in the amount of work done. Indeed nothing need limit it but the capacity of its staff. Its first year it could do more work than Basrah or Bahrein ever turned out in any year of their entire history. It is difficult to do medical work in those Oman towns because of the crowds. Everyone wants attention and he wants it right away. Much of the work must be done under the eyes of a wondering crowd of spectators. Nothing seems to cause more surprise than the ten minutes' scrub of the Operator's and the Assistant's hands previous to an operation. "Why do you wash your hands such an astonishing length of time," asked an Arab of Suroor, my assistant. Suroor is a very dark-skinned Beloochee and quite a humorist. "I am trying, if possible, to get them white," he explained.

Medical and especially surgical work has to be done under handicaps but good work can be done. In Ajman we housed our operative cases in a half-completed summer house. To my surprise everyone provided himself with a bedstead. It is very unusual to see Arabs so particular about a bedstead. Generally they prefer to sleep on the ground, but the ground here was infested by camel ticks, the most voracious insect that I have ever seen. They are a sort of fifty-horse-power bedbug, and there was abundant reason for wanting bedsteads. In Um el Gowein the patients slept in some unused rooms that were available, while some of them brought tents. In Hameerah they built us a date stick house for hospital purposes. With it all we managed to keep our surgical work pretty clean. We ran an even fifty hernia operations, with one insignificant stitch infection.

There are no Arabs like the Omanees. I doubt if such hospitality could be duplicated anywhere else in the world. Wherever we went

it was the same. In Ajman we had to flee from the redoubtable camel ticks and live upstairs, and in Um el Gowein we subsisted on water saltier than any human being ought to be condemned to drink, except as a punishment for crime, but the hospitality of the people never failed. We drank coffee and tea in the houses of the rich and in the homes of the poor, and the cordiality of their unaffected welcome affords a thrill of joy even in memory. One day a call came for an emergency visit to Ras el Kheima and we started off in a small boat. As frequently happens, the wind which was favorable at first, died down, and was replaced by one exactly in our faces. So we disembarked and stopped for entertainment in a near-by village. The man who was



A CORNER IN DEBAI BAZAAR

taking us to see the patient had a friend in that village, and we went to his house. No one but slaves was at home, and they set before us a meal of their own meager fare: An hour or two later the master of the house returned and with profuse apologies provided us with a second lunch. He expressed regret because he had no time to prepare anything adequate for the occasion, but what he set before us was quite enough. Along with some minor trimmings we had an enormous dish of the best mangoes that I have ever eaten. They were the size of fairly large pears and perfectly ripe. I believe that I ate nine. To the uninitiated this will seem like incipient insanity, but those who know anything about mangoes will recognize that it was the only possible thing to do.

The initiative and energy of these Arabs are surprising and in a rough sort of way they regulate their politics to stimulate trade. Debai is the largest city of the Oman coast, and there is no duty at all charged on either exports or imports. The result is that Debai's trade during the past ten years has grown enormously, only Bahrein and Kuwait surpassing it, of all the Gulf ports. Half or more of Debai's imports are said to be goods for Persian ports. Persia charges enormous import duties. In some cases they are said to run as high as 100 per cent. A clerk who had worked in the Persian customs told me that in the year and more that he was there, not a case of tea entered the harbor and paid customs, in that particular port, although the Persians are notorious tea-drinkers, and during that period the shops in the Bazaar were always full of tea. Like most other things it was brought to Debai where there is no tariff, and from there shipped in Arab or Persian sail boats to its Persian port and landed. If necessary, it is easy to placate subordinate customs officials. The methods of doing that have been well worked out.

There were times during the war when the Gulf had difficulty in getting rice enough from India to eat. There were no steamers to bring it in. In Debai when steamers failed them, they went to India in their sail boats and brought it up in such quantities that there were times when Debai was selling rice even to Bahrein.

But the great appeal of Oman is not its medical needs, nor its business ability, nor even its hospitality and friendship. Oman is the one province in Arabia where the people have an open mind for the Gospel. I know of no other section of Arabia where it is so easy to gain a respectful hearing for the Message. Indeed, I have been asked for religious services on Sunday, so that these open-minded Arabs might come and listen. One of the early and vivid memories of language study days is of Omanee Arabs coming by night to have parables read and explained to them. The Omanee is earnestly religious and perhaps nowhere do we see Arabs to whom their religion means more. It is easy to talk to them of Christ, for their minds turn easily to religious things and they are not intolerant as Arabs usually are. In Abu Dhabi one of the Arabs was so interested that he came repeatedly for instruction. He read the Gospel of John through in one night.

We have been invited to come down and establish permanent medical missionary work in Oman. Surely as we seek to enter the open doors around us we must not neglect this one. All that is needed is a Doctor to be sent there, and a little later a clergyman to work with him. Those are the human needs. To secure these and God's blessing and power and success in the work that they will set up, we need men and women who will pray for the Missionaries and more still for the simple-minded, open-hearted, hospitable Arabs of Oman who constitute perhaps the greatest opportunity the Arabian Mission faces today.

PERSONALIA

The Rev. and Mrs. James Cantine, Rev. and Mrs. E. E. Calverley, and their children, and Dr. and Mrs. Paul W. Harrison have booked their passage to sail from Bombay on S.S. "City of Sparta," April 15, 1922. This steamer comes directly to New York, and is expected to arrive the last of May.

On Dr. and Mrs. Cantine's leaving Baghdad their places will be taken by Rev. and Mrs. H. A. Bilkert, whose station at Amara will be occupied by Rev. and Mrs. Dirk Dykstra, recently returned from furlough.

Dr. Paul W. Harrison made a flying visit to Baghdad in February investigating the possibilities of a homeward journey overland from Baghdad to Mosul and thence to Damascus. It is not probable, however, that such a journey will prove feasible.

Miss Jane A. Scardefield, who has been in the hospital at Madanapalle, India, for some time, has booked her passage by steamer sailing from Colombo direct to Boston, February 22. She expects to arrive in Boston on or about April 5th.

Miss Grace O. Strang, recently appointed a member of the Arabian Mission, sailed from Port Said, February 22, 1922, expecting to reach Kuwait about the middle of March.

Dr. Norman Leak, under short term appointment to the Arabian Mission for a year, substituting for Dr. Mylrea in his absence, arrived in Kuwait and took charge of the medical work at the end of January.

Dr. and Mrs. C. S. G. Mylrea have secured passage for England on the S.S. "Haverford," sailing from Philadelphia on June 13th. They will spend several months with relatives in England before returning to the Field.

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